SERBIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

29 September – 12 October 2015

Highlights

- In September the MOI registered 51,048 asylum-seekers as compared to 37,195 in August. The percentage of claimants from refugee-producing countries increased from 94 to 96%. While the share of Syrian applicants shrunk from 74% to 62% that of Afghans increased from 12 to 22%. Asylum-seekers from Pakistan or Bangladesh shrunk from over 4 to under 3%. The overall age and gender composition remained generally unchanged.

- The number of refugee arrivals from FYR Macedonia averaged 4,300/day in the reporting period. Registration capacities were stepped up to around 6,000 persons/day in Preševo and 500/day elsewhere. As at 12 October, 213,929 intentions to seek asylum were registered in 2015.

- Numbers of refugees observed in Belgrade and in the area close to the border with Hungary at any time further reduced to around 100 in Belgrade and 15-20 in the Subotica-Horgosz-Kanjija area at the end of the reporting period.

- Government of Serbia identified a building in Bujanovac which is to serve as an additional, smaller registration centre, at times when the pressure on Preševo One Stop Centre is high. The building is in good condition, but requires refurbishment and equipment.

Intention to apply for asylum (Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia) 58,930 registered their intention to seek asylum during the reporting period.
UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Serbia is situated along the preferred route through the Western Balkans for refugees originating from the Middle East and Asia, aiming to seek asylum in Europe. The majority are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. UNHCR estimates that at any given time over 7,000 refugees are on Serbian territory.

Refugees continued to enter Croatia on foot, primarily at Berkašovo/Bapska border crossing but also through Šid/Tovarnik, with 3,800 estimated exits on average daily. Croatia reported several cases of possible food poisoning at Berkašovo/Bapska border crossing on 30 September. Consequently, the Serbian authorities introduced stricter control of aid delivered at exit points.

Very few asylum-seekers made use of registration procedures in the Hungarian transit zones near Horgoš 1 and Kelebija. The suspension of readmission procedure from Hungary, introduced on 14 September, remained in place during the reporting period.

The comprehensive registration process led to heavy overcrowding and long queues inside and outside the Preševo One Stop Centre. As a result, an average of 1,000 refugees and migrants had to stay overnight at the Centre and some 2,000 were sleeping outside between 2 and 4 October. UNHCR and partners were present and supported the Serbian authorities in its response. By 6 October, the registration backlog was cleared. A record 6,128 asylum-seekers were registered in Preševo Centre on 7 October.

European Union announced the allocation of additional emergency assistance for Serbia (EUR 7 mil) and FYR Macedonia (EUR 3 mil), divided between the enhancement of reception capacities and increased humanitarian assistance in both countries. On the bilateral level, Government of Romania decided to answer the appeal for assistance coming from the Serbian Government by awarding it EUR 226,500 for the refugee crisis response.

On 1 October, UNHCR issued a revised appeal, envisaging 1.4 mil Mediterranean refugees in 2015-16, totalling USD 128 mil and asking the donors to allow their funds to be flexible due to “very volatile operational context”. Although the vast majority of recent arrivals have travelled from Turkey through Greece, FYR Macedonia and Serbia, possible alternative routes include the sea route from Turkey to Italy, or from Greece through Albania to Montenegro or Italy.

Achievements

Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and HCIT enabled for successful reunification of at least a dozen refugee families in Preševo and Berkašovo. Belgrade Centre for Social Welfare, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) and Asylum Info Centre were also identifying and taking care of UAMs in Belgrade.
- Together with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) and Border Police at the One-Stop Centre in Preševo, UNHCR prioritised PWSNs to fast-track registration procedures. At least 30 families were assisted daily.
- IOM and UNHCR continued to transport up to 4,000 most vulnerable refugees daily from Miratovac refugee aid point (RAP) to Preševo Centre.
UNHCR and the Head of the Social Services for Preševo agreed to establish a team for unaccompanied minors and separated children under the leadership of the Social Service and with participation of the Red Cross. UNHCR will support the team with liaison and training, including on the establishment of a Best Interest Determination Panel. It was further agreed that:

a) A Red Cross Desk for family tracing will be placed inside the Registration Room in Preševo Centre where people can start the tracing process in case of need;

b) A family reunification tent will be placed within the Centre;

c) Family tracing services will be reinforced with boards, leaflets and poster information dissemination in English, Farsi and Arabic at Miratovac RAP, inside and outside Preševo Centre.

As of 11 October, daily coordination meetings of NGOs working outside of Preševo Centre (MSF, Remar, International Volunteers, Humedica, DRC, UNHCR, etc.) were established, including on the criteria for identification of persons with specific needs, referral for registration etc.

World Vision (WV) stepped up its child/mother protection activities in the North. WV established and are running the Child Friendly Space in Šid/Berkasovo.

UNHCR erected a new tent used to collect and assist separated family members at Berkasovo and put in place a caravan to be used as a mobile office, ensuring 24/7 coverage of this border point.

UNHCR and HCIT assisted PWSNs at Berkasovo and referred them to UNHCR Croatia colleagues for further assistance, as required, during their journey onwards.

Israel Aid (IsraAid), in collaboration with Save the Children, provided psychosocial support to women and children at Berkasovo border point.

Three UNICEF child friendly spaces, equipped with educational materials and toys, are currently operating in Preševo, Belgrade (managed by the Danish Refugee Council - DRC), and Šid (managed by World Vision). Over 2,800 children, most of whom are between 6 and 10 years old, have so far rested and played in these safe spaces.

UNICEF deployed additional social workers in Preševo and Belgrade to help identify and support the most vulnerable children and families. UNICEF is upscaling the outreach component of the social services in Preševo and Belgrade, whose statutory obligations include intervening and protecting children at risk of abuse and unaccompanied minors. Further capacity-building of social workers is on-going.

UNICEF assessment of the child-sensitive procedures for unaccompanied minors is ongoing, with the deployment of a DRC child protection expert.

UNICEF produced and distributed information leaflets in Arabic on landmines, as many refugee families travel through Croatia, which still has unremoved landmines and unexploded ordinance left from the war in former Yugoslavia.

UNICEF produced information leaflets in Arabic for parents, concerned with protection issues, entitled “How parents can support children to cope with a crisis”. Translation of these leaflets into Farsi and Urdu is ongoing.

UNHCR’s partners Amity and Sigma Plus had mobile teams consisting of social workers and psychologists present in Negotin, Zaječar, Dimitrovgrad, Pirot, Niš and Bujanovac, who reported daily on the influx of refugees in these municipalities, their needs as well as the needs of the local communities and services provided. They had an Arabic-speaking team member in Zaječar and mobile teams used services of locally recruited translators.

Balkan Centre for Migration (BCM) continued to provide an information officer/interpreter for state institutions involved with refugees in Kanjiža (single shift) and 3 interpreters for authorities in Šid (3 shifts).

On 5 October, a private bus transporting refugees was involved in a serious traffic accident near Vranje, causing tragic death of one female Afghan refugee. Nine injured refugees were hospitalized in Vranje, supported by authorities the UNHCR and its partners.

Asylum Info Centre continued to provide information, referrals, aid, counselling and internet access to refugees in Belgrade. On 11 October, a group of 3 UAM Afghani refugees was identified by the Asylum Info Centre staff who provided the young refugees with food, warm clothes and shoes and escorted them to UNICEF’s child friendly space in Belgrade.
Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees and migrants continued to cross into Serbia from Bulgaria, with the total number of arrivals between 250-550 daily across the entire stretch of this border. Amity NGO appealed for enhancement of registration capacities of Negotin border police, due to increase in the number of daily arrivals there.
- Refugees continued to complain about limited access to registration services at the Alien Office of Belgrade Police in Savska Street.
- The need to capture more accurately, in the registration process, relevant data such as numbers and ages of children, UAMs, separated children and other PSWNs for protection intervention and other follow-up purposes, remained unmet in the reporting period.
- Additional activities with adolescents organised by the UNICEF/DRC in the child-friendly space in Belgrade will begin in the coming week.
- Joint UNICEF/UNHCR advocacy efforts are underway to ensure smooth access of young unaccompanied children into Serbia’s standard formal care system.
- UNICEF is finalising a list of recommendations for the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants (SCRM) on the fast tracking of children and families in the Preševo registration centre.
- WV is looking into opening child-friendly spaces in Principovac and Preševo (in close cooperation with SCRM and UNICEF).
- UNICEF conceptualised solutions for real-time monitoring and gathering more reliable information on children to support more adequately the planning for the response to the needs of children on the move. An application for tablets and mobile phones is being developed that will enable quick, real-time data collection at different points of refugees/migrants route as well as at service delivery points. It should make it easier to collect the data on total numbers, as well as age- and gender-disaggregated data for children, utilization of services in child-friendly spaces and information on the basic needs of children and their families. The application will be finalized and pre-tested by 20 October.
Education

**Achievements and Impact**

- In the Banja Koviljača, Krnjača, Bogovađa and Krnjača asylum centres, UNHCR funded DRC activities for children, including a kindergarten supervised by qualified care-givers, and English and Serbian language lessons three times per week to improve their chances of integration within the community.
- The Bogovađa asylum centre conducted sewing classes for women and mothers who are protégés of this centre. This activity boosted refugees’ psychological well-being and self-confidence, and empowered them with transferable skills. Products include bedsheets used in other asylum centres and the One-Stop Centre in Preševo.
- Save the Children held creative workshops for refugee children in Belgrade.

**Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps**

- Notwithstanding the above-mentioned efforts, refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection continued to face challenges of integration and education opportunities.

Health

**Achievements and Impact**

- The medical clinics supported by UNHCR continued to work 24/7 in Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre.
- UNHCR continuously supplied medical teams in Preševo, Miratovac, Kanjiža and asylum centre in Krnjača with medication and medical supplies.
- Italian Embassy delivered a new ambulance car, donated by Friuli area in Italy to Preševo health centre.
- Two UNICEF mother-and-baby spaces are operational - one in Belgrade and one in Preševo - where lactating mothers can continue to breastfeed and receive necessary information on breastfeeding. Nurses were deployed to support breastfeeding mothers and counsel them on infant feeding. To facilitate effective counselling, UNICEF made video materials in Arabic available to mothers through tablets and via internet supported by Telenor. Referrals to paediatricians were organised on a needs basis.
- Humedica medical team installed their tent at the end of the line outside Preševo Centre on 10 October, offering medical assistance, tea and fruits to the refugees waiting to be admitted into the Centre.
- DRC, through UNICEF funds, recruited two nurses to assist breast-feeding mothers in the Preševo Centre.
- UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in defining the standards for optimal food baskets for infants and information for lactating mothers that was distributed by partners whose mandate is the provision of food.
- Provision of daily feeding for infant and young children was organized by UNICEF through in-kind donations received from Nordeus and Miksalište. However, since low acceptance of the jarred baby-food has been noticed in the field, an in-depth assessment with mothers is to be conducted in the following weeks, which will result in a renewed guidance. Diapers were also distributed to mothers.
- Orientation training on Infant and Young Child Feeding in emergencies was organized by UNICEF for health practitioners and CSO partners with the support from a joint UNICEF/WHO HQ mission.
- WHO distributed medical supplies and consumables to 13 primary health care centres (PHCs). The following shipment is to reach the PHCs in the coming 10 days.
- WHO conducted a health and nutrition mission with UNICEF. The mission report with recommendations is upcoming.
- WHO provided support to the Institute of Public Health (IPH) of Serbia in strengthening their monitoring and surveillance in the field, including through training for medical and non-medical staff providing services in the field.
- International Medical Corps (IMC) started to operate a mobile medical unit (MMU) in collaboration with local partner International Aid Network (IAN). The MMU consists of a medical doctor, a nurse, a psychologist and an interpreter, and has been conducting field visits on a daily basis since 28 October; it is in daily communication with
the SCRM regarding the needs in the field. Based on SCRM’s recommendations, the team chooses its location for the day. The IMC MMU was providing services to refugees in two locations: Principovac One Stop Centre in Šid and the bus station in Belgrade. The MMU collaborated with the medical teams from local health centres in both locations.

- Balkan Centre for Migration (BCM) provided for visits of a mobile medical team to the old brick factory (OBF) near Subotica once per week and visits to Berkasovo aid point twice weekly.
- Medical teams of Belgrade health centres continued providing health care services to refugees in Belgrade parks, including the UNHCR/DRC medical team of Zemun health centre. Private health care centre “Jedro” provided medical care at Miksalište in Belgrade.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNICEF will be developing a Standard Operating Procedures on controlled handling of infant formula (including sourcing), as a follow-up to the UNICEF/WHO joint assessment on nutrition mission.
- At the OBF there was no regular presence of a medical team and no one to refer the refugees to except the ambulance services in emergencies.
- Mobile medical teams were needed in Negotin and Dimitrovgrad at the Serbia/Bulgaria border.

### Food Security and Nutrition

#### Achievements and Impact

- Distribution of up to 600 UNHCR-funded food rations by the Red Cross continued daily at Preševo Centre. Red Cross also continued daily distribution of pastry donated by the SCRM to refugees arriving from FYR Macedonia.
- On 4 October, volunteers working in Preševo distributed 1,000 UNHCR-funded food parcels to refugees queuing long hours in order to register.
- ADRA continued to provide, through local Red Cross organisations and MSF, 2,000 food and hygiene packages daily, mainly for refugees arriving from Bulgaria.
- Bread buns and High Energy Biscuits (HEB) were distributed by HCIT and UNHCR at Berkasovo.
- On 7 October, volunteers from Novi Pazar brought 1,500 meals, hygienic articles and bread to be distributed by staff at the HCIT/UNHCR stand at Berkasovo.
- UNHCR, HCIT, MSF, Women and Health Alliance International (WAHA), Red Cross, World Vision and UNICEF were present daily at Berkasovo and Šid, providing humanitarian aid and medical assistance.
- HCIT delivered food packages and baby food at the OBF, Vašariště RAP, Berkasovo and Šid border crossings.
- Philanthropy distributed 200 food kits per day in Berkasovo, and 800 in total in Belgrade (Miksalište).
- Volunteers from Germany and Austria distributed food and water at Šid-Tovarnik border crossing.
- On 9 October, the team of Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation volunteered in distribution of humanitarian aid in Miksalište, delivered 150 fish cans and prepared breakfast for 150 refugees.
- At the Red Cross container, food was distributed to refugees in Belgrade parks.
- Red Cross distributed food once daily at Vašariště RAP. They also distributed food and water at OBF and Subotica bus station.
- Caritas and Menedek distributed food at OBF.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Miksalište in Belgrade needed donations of tuna cans and baby food.
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Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- As of 7 October, a new garbage truck started assisting clean-up in Preševo, thanks to UNDP supporting the rental of the truck and covering the wages of 3 PUC Vranje employees.
- UNHCR partner HCIT continued garbage removal with the help of volunteers at Berkasovo and Šid and provided 17 garbage bins on 30 September.
- UNHCR and HCIT put up hygiene awareness posters in Arabic and Farsi in Berkasovo border crossing.
- HCIT cleaned the OBF site in cooperation with Subotica communal service.
- DRC started cleaning the new registration site in Bujanovac on 9 October.
- On 4-5 October, Preševo Centre site was cleaned thoroughly with the help of volunteers and refugees, who were provided with cleaning equipment by UNHCR.
- On 12 October, a shower facility was put in place and made available to the refugees in Miksališe in Belgrade, thanks to the support of CRS and Caritas Valjevo.
- Public Services kept the latrines and public areas used by refugees in Belgrade fairly clean.
- On 5 October, four chemical toilets were delivered by Philanthropy to Dimitrovgrad at Serbia/Bulgaria border. Philanthropy already rented 3 sanitary containers with showers and 3 with toilets for Preševo and 1 shower container and 1 toilet container for the police station in Zaječar.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Horgoš 2 border crossing, which remained barricaded from the Hungarian side, is to be cleaned by HCIT in the coming period.
- Amity NGO appealed for one mobile shower and toilets at Negotin border crossing.
- The medical container in Miratovac RAP remained in need of water supply.

Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- SCRM, DRC and UNHCR continued to assist in augmenting registration equipment, expansion and weather proofing of waiting areas of Preševo Centre (including gravelling, signage on toilets and water points, putting up plastic sheeting as shelter from rain etc.).
- SCRM provided information and free transport to Asylum Centre Knjača in Belgrade twice daily, where asylum-seekers could find shelter, food and other services in the cold season instead of resting in the open in parks.
- Two UNHCR rub halls were installed in Preševo Centre, and UNHCR tarpaulins sheltered asylum-seekers lining up for registration.
- On 11 October, UNHCR provided 37 mats to international volunteers who are supporting refugees (in particular women and children) using an abandoned house near Miratovac RAP at night while awaiting access to registration.
- Volunteers from Sweden assisted UNHCR with distribution of blankets to refugees having to spend the night in the open in front of Preševo Centre while waiting to be registered on 4-5 October.
- On 5 October, the MSF distributed some 1,000 raincoats to refugees queuing outside the Preševo Centre.
- UNHCR distributed almost 6,000 raincoats to refugees at Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre along with water, food, blankets and clothes.
- UNICEF procured, on an emergency basis, 1,200 children raincoats to be distributed in Berkasovo, Belgrade and Preševo.
- On 3 October, UNICEF installed a ‘mother and child’ tent for breastfeeding women and women with young infants at Berkasovo border point, operational 9:00-17:00 hrs daily.
On 11 October, the shelter situation at Berkasovo improved since the Border Police and SCRM put up 5 tunnel tents on the Serbian side of the border crossing with Croatia, in addition to the 3 tents already installed on the Croatian side, totalling 8 tents, which can accommodate some 800 persons in case people have to wait at the border.

UNHCR/HCIT tent that was set up at Berkasovo for refugees that got separated from family members was also used as a safe space for women to change theirs and children's clothes.

HCIT representatives distributed blankets, raincoats, water and hygiene for babies at Berkasovo border crossing. On 8 October, HCIT delivered 10 bales of blankets, 4 boxes of raincoats, and 12 boxes of high energy biscuits (HEB), funded by UNHCR.

MSF and Red Cross distributed raincoats at Berkasovo.

UNHCR delivered 2 wheelchairs at Berkasovo.

Philanthropy distributed: 500 sets of underwear, 400 snickers, 455 long-sleeves T-shirts, 400 socks for children, 400 socks for adults, 500 rubber boots for children, 500 rubber boots for adults, 200 raincoats for children, 400 for adults, 800 waterproof jackets for children and 800 waterproof jackets for adults in Berkasovo; 400 raincoats for children, 400 rubber boots for children, 300 rubber boots for adults, 400 socks for children and 400 socks for adults in Preševo and 200 pairs of sneakers and 50 items of warm clothes in Negotin.

Foundation Ana and Vlade Divac delivered 4 mobile containers to Miksalište as support to improve the conditions of refugees in Belgrade:
- One container serves as room for paediatric check-ups;
- One container is a nursery;
- One mobile container serves as a room for washing and drying machines;
- One mobile container serves as storage for clothes for refugees.

Foundation Ana and Vlade Divac and Catholic Relief Services delivered 400 sleeping bags, 200 towels and 150 hygienic parcels at Miksalište.

In cooperation with Mixer-House in Belgrade, UNICEF made available second-hand winter clothes for infants and children. Distribution of those clothes was organised by DRC in Preševo.

UNICEF procured 500 waterproof baby changing mats to be distributed in mother and baby spaces, along with wet wipes, antibacterial gel and diapers.

Arbeiter Samariten Bund (ASB) continued its construction works on preparation of a new RAP in Subotica (near the OBF).

On 5 October, Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre (NSHC) and Terre des Hommes Regional Office in Budapest initiated a project in Serbia and FyR Macedonia which aims to deliver emergency assistance (NFIs), disseminate information on asylum rights and guidance on services available and establish temporary protective spaces for refugee children and their families, particularly those staying in transit settlements and areas along the migration corridors. The project also encompasses age-appropriate, gender and culturally sensitive recreational activities, baby corners, emergency counselling support, “psychological first aid” to distressed mothers and children and mobile communication services. Services offered to the beneficiaries are provided by one mobile unit per country.

UNHCR delivered 700 blankets, 600 sleeping mats and 100 plastic sheets in Belgrade.

HCIT distributed hygiene kits for adults, women and babies at the OBF.

Intersos distributed raincoats to refugees at OBF.

Swiss foundation Remar provided hot drinks and dry clothes to refugees in Belgrade.

Save the Children and Asylum Info Centre provided refugee families with products for baby care in Belgrade.

Due to decreased numbers of refugees and change in the weather, the Army dismantled its tents in the park in front of Bristol hotel on 9 October, set up a month ago.

**Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps**

World Vision (WV) started its winterisation programme (personal and RAP winterisation) in Šid. In the coming week, WV will be working directly or through its partners to expand its winterisation activities in other active refugee locations where the needs for winter clothing and also upgrades of existing camps is seen as necessary.

UNICEF initiated further procurement of winter items.

Winter clothes (jackets, socks and boots) were needed in Berkasovo, Preševo and Belgrade.
- Amity appealed for warm and dry shelter where refugees can await registration and change into dry clothes and warm up at Negotin border crossing.
- Additional raincoats were needed at entry and exit points in the country.
Working in partnership

- On 30 September, the UNCT attended and addressed a **Donor Coordination Meeting**, which, co-chaired by Minister for Labour Aleksandar Vulin and Minister Without Portfolio in charge of European integration Jadranka Joksimović, requested more bilateral and multi-lateral aid for Serbia to continue responding to the refugee situation humanely. As a follow-up, an **Operational Donor Meeting on Migrations** was held on 8 October in Belgrade, chaired by European Integration Office of the Republic of Serbia (SEIO).

- On 8th October, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs together with UNHCR co-chaired the **Refugee Protection Working Group** meeting held in Belgrade.

- On 2nd and 9th October, the **UN Country Team (UNCT) Refugee Task Force** made up of the UN agencies in Serbia met in UNHCR premises in Belgrade.

- On 12 October, a **Partners’ Briefing** took place in Belgrade, where the UNCT in Serbia presented to its partners the ongoing and upcoming activities delivered in supporting Government of the Republic of Serbia in dealing with refugees/migrants crisis. The UNCT agencies provided so far USD 2.5 mil, while an additional USD 8.5 mil was pledged and stands ready for disbursement in the coming weeks to partners in Serbia for winterization needs. Resources are made available through appeals that are launched at the global and regional level, through cooperation with donors at the country level and from Agencies’ emergency core resources. Most of the support is provided by UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency), lead UN Agency for refugees, along with other UN partners - International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN), World Health Organization (WHO), as well as the World Food Programme (WFP).

- On 12 October, a **coordination and information exchange meeting** chaired by UNHCR took place at Berkasovo. People in Need, Czech volunteers, WAHA, MSF, World Vision, Operation Mercy (representing also Operation Mobilization), Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation and Philanthropy (representing also Catholic Relief Service and Solidarnost) attended.